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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

February 12, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Thomas D. Watkins Jr., Chairman

SUBJECT: Discussion on the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)  
Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities  
Education Act (IDEA)

Michigan's SEAC significantly values and places high priority on every student's right to benefit from their free and appropriate public education. The SEAC believes that increased federal funding is vital in supporting Michigan's commitment for all of our children to have access to the general education curriculum and be working towards their full potential. A federal commitment to speed up the curve to get to **full funding of the IDEA** would allow Michigan's educational system to support these needs: (1) Personnel Development, (2) Prevention and Early Intervention services, and (3) Diagnosis and Eligibility Issues.

- **Personnel Development**

The SEAC supports programs to recruit and train teachers, service providers, and support staff for Michigan's students, both special education and general education, as well as innovative programs to retain a highly qualified educational system.

As more emphasis continues to be placed on accountability, providing continuous opportunities for educational growth for all parents, teachers, and service providers is another vital component of increased Personnel Development that SEAC supports.

- **Prevention and Early Intervention Services**

The SEAC sees full funding of IDEA helping Michigan's schools to continue and improve the range and scope of the early intervention and prevention services provided. Research continues to show that early intervention and prevention services to preschool and early elementary school children and their parents can often help resolve some learning problems.

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- **Diagnosis and Eligibility Issues**

Members of SEAC support efforts to appropriately identify children having trouble making adequate progress within the general education curriculum, by using research-based justifications in addressing the definition of Learning Disabled.

SEAC members are also concerned about the disproportionate representation of minorities and children of low socio-economic status identified as disabled. Increased federal funding for IDEA could help train general educators to more effectively meet these students' unique educational needs within the context of General Education.

SEAC members also believe that efforts to streamline the evaluation and reevaluation process and reduce paperwork need to be carefully balanced with a continuing enhancement of parental and general educator involvement in the Individualized Education Planning process.

In summary, the SEAC places a high priority on the continuous evaluation and improvement of our educational system based on student progress towards a high standard of excellence in learning.